

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Friday 19 May 1978

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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State Dept. review completed

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Friday, 19 May 1978.

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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EGYPT: Reactions to Crackdown

25X1 [] The targets of Egyptian President Sadat's crackdown on both the political left and right have labeled the referendum he plans Sunday unconstitutional and have vowed to fight back, if necessary "in the streets." The government, meanwhile, is trying to marshal popular support for the vote and may already have taken legal steps preparatory to dissolving one of Egypt's three "official" parties, the party of the left. Sadat is likely to have his way, but his course is not without danger.

25X1 [] Sadat moved forcefully against his critics on 14 May by issuing a new "corrective" to Egypt's political evolution and more rigidly defining the principles by which political parties must operate. He intends through the referendum to sideline the old guard leadership of the conservative New Wafd Party and probably to dissolve the party of the left, the National Progressive Unionist Group, as well as to suppress its newspaper *Al Ahali*. The referendum is also aimed at silencing those leftists who have opposed Sadat's restructuring of Egypt's economic and political life.

25X1 [] The referendum will give Sadat broad discretionary powers to define who is subject to prosecution. The People's Assembly is to meet on 27 May to pass a special law defining those activities that "corrupt political life."

25X1 [] The targets of Sadat's referendum apparently do not intend to give up without a fight. Hilmi Murad, the New Wafd's leader in parliament--who would probably inherit his party's leadership if the old guard were removed--said that, regardless of the vote, the New Wafd would not remove the leaders whom Sadat indicated must go.

25X1 [] The New Wafd would resist first in parliament, then in the courts, and finally in the streets if necessary according to Murad. He asserted that the government would rig the referendum and expressed the view that Sadat's crackdown would destroy the President's careful effort to build an image of Egypt as a tranquil, unified state pursuing a democratic path.

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[] The leftists also appear unwilling to acquiesce in Sadat's crackdown. The Thursday issue of *Al Ahali*, which was confiscated before distribution, has been described as highly inflammatory. The issue was signed by Khalid Muhyi al-Din, the leader of the left party and one of the few survivors--along with Sadat--of the group of officers that overthrew the monarchy in 1952.

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[] Most Egyptians will probably accept Sadat's explanation that Egypt's press and politicians need to be disciplined. The targets of his attacks are few in number, represent political extremes, and are without major resources. The left and the New Wafd together hold fewer than 30 of the 360 seats in the People's Assembly.

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[] Sadat's course, however, is not without danger. More politically aware Egyptians will see it as a major retreat from his most popular domestic program--political liberalization. The left and the right may be ready to force him to adopt openly repressive measures rather than allow him to maintain only a democratic facade.

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[] Perhaps most important, the legendary patience of the Egyptian populace has shown signs of fraying under the burden of high prices, consumer shortages, and apprehension over Sadat's Middle East policies. Egyptian reaction if Sadat's opponents take to the streets or if it becomes apparent that the government has rigged the referendum is difficult to predict.

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[] The New Wafd's popularity has not yet been tested in elections. Some observers think it is extensive and may include support from the influential Muslim Brotherhood--which has had a reputation for being prone to violence. []

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Election Fraud

25X1 [REDACTED] //President Balaguer's complicity in the military's effort to alter Tuesday's vote is becoming clearer. Balaguer continues to condone the military's action and resist mounting international pressure to get the military back to the barracks and resume a fair vote count.//

25X1 [REDACTED] Opposition candidate Antonio Guzman is determined to avoid violence, but will probably not be able to prevent it if Balaguer and the military continue on their present course. There is little chance that Guzman will give up his claim on the presidency as long as he believes that world opinion supports him.

25X1 [REDACTED]

25X1 [REDACTED]

25X1 [REDACTED] There is increasing evidence that Guzman was headed for victory when the military closed the electoral commission with only a quarter of the votes counted. An hour before the takeover, a Balaguer supporter told the US Embassy that tallies by the ruling party of roughly half the vote showed Guzman holding a commanding lead. He also stated that party leaders had privately conceded a Guzman victory and ordered local party offices to begin rigging returns. [REDACTED]

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SAHEL: Results of 1977 Drought

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[] Gambian President Jawara arrives in the US today for a 17-day visit. As current president of the Permanent Inter-governmental Committee to Combat Drought in the Sahel, he will be discussing aid for the Sahel with US officials and private organizations. Erratic rainfall has again had a serious impact on food production in the Sahel and neighboring parts of West Africa. For the sixth year in a row, financial and food assistance will be necessary from the international donor community.

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[] Adverse climatic conditions during the 1977-78 crop year, have caused serious shortfalls in food production in the countries and vicinity. The UN-sponsored World Food Program reported as recently as March that a minimum of 456,000 tons of cereals are needed for Sahelian food relief, plus another 124,000 tons to meet emergency contingencies.

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[] Only 420,000 tons of food have been pledged so far, leaving an estimated deficit of 160,000 tons. Only about 192,000 tons of food had apparently reached the recipient countries by the end of March; some of the countries are having trouble meeting high transportation costs.

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[] Five of the region's states--Mauritania, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, and Chad--historically have been largely self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs. In Senegal, the relatively large urban population relies on imported rice. Life from year to year, however, is heavily dependent on the sparse rainfall of from 25 to 60 centimeters annually.

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[] Although the 5.2-million-square-kilometer Sahel is generally considered stationary, the conditions that produce it shift north and south. In some years there is enough rain

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for bountiful crops of grain far to the north; in others, the arid conditions of the Sahara move south and crops die, wells dry up, and animals and people starve. The effects of the series of droughts that began in 1968 have spread as far south as Benin and Ghana. [REDACTED]

BRIEFS

USSR

[REDACTED] The conviction and sentencing of Soviet dissident Yuriy Orlov yesterday came as no surprise. Orlov was convicted of engaging in "anti-Soviet activity" and received the maximum sentence of seven years in a Soviet labor camp with an additional five years of exile. Although Orlov's "crime" was his leadership of the "Helsinki Group," no direct mention of that was made during the trial. The prosecution focused on his dissemination of allegedly fabricated and slanderous information about the Soviet Union.

[REDACTED] Two Georgian associates of Orlov have confessed to similar "crimes" in a Tbilisi courtroom. The Georgians' contacts with the US Embassy and with US reporters have received particular attention from the prosecution in this case.

[REDACTED] Soviet heavyhandedness in these trials and willingness to implicate the US Government in alleged subversion are indications of the regime's uneasiness with the dissident movement and the international support for it. The severe sentences are meant as an object lesson to would-be Soviet dissidents and their supporters abroad. [REDACTED]



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CHINA

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[REDACTED] //China's industrial output reached an alltime high in the first quarter of 1978 as a result of the much improved performance in critical energy sectors and in certain key industrial provinces. The improvement stems in large part from recent measures to lessen political influence in factory management and to restore bonuses and other production incentives.//

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[REDACTED] //The newly resurrected State Economic Commission announced output gains over the first quarter of 1977 for coal, crude oil, natural gas, and electric power. Shanghai--China's largest industrial metropolis--claimed an output rise of 31.5 percent over the first quarter of 1977. China's railways reportedly carried 30 percent more freight than in the same period last year. [REDACTED]

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